



The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare

G.K. Chesterton , Jonathan Lethem (Introduction)

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G. K. Chesterton's surreal masterpiece is a psychological thriller that centers on seven anarchists in turn-of-the-century London who call themselves by the names of the days of the week. Chesterton explores the meanings of their disguised identities in what is a fascinating mystery and, ultimately, a spellbinding allegory.

As Jonathan Lethem remarks in his Introduction, The real characters are the ideas. Chesterton's nutty agenda is really quite simple: to expose moral relativism and parlor nihilism for the devils he believes them to be. This wouldn't be interesting at all, though, if he didn't also show such passion for giving the devil his due. He animates the forces of chaos and anarchy with every ounce of imaginative verve and rhetorical force in his body.

The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare Details

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Η ουσία είναι να καταλάβουμε πως πρέπει να κοιτούμε και τις δύο πλευρές σε κάθε "Είναι" σε κάθε "αγαθό", ώστε να ερμηνεύσουμε τη θέση μας και να κατανοήσουμε τον εαυτό μας μέσω των άλλων εύκολα και απλά.

Να γεφυρώσουμε όλα τα κενά...

«Μπορείτε να πιείτε από το ποτάρι που ήπια εγώ;»

να βιβλίο που μπορεί να ερμηνευτεί με ήπιους συνδυασμούς τρώπων..

Καλή ανήγνωση!!

Πολλούς ασπασμούς!

Carmen says

Through all this ordeal his root horror had been isolation, and there are no words to express the abyss between isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the mathematicians that four is twice two. But two is not twice one; two is two thousand times one. That is why, in spite of a hundred disadvantages, the world will always return to monogamy. 45%

Okay, a lot of what I have to say about this book will be spoilers. I am going to hide the spoilers.

First, let's examine what I can say without spoilers.

Ostensibly, this is a book about an undercover policeman who infiltrates a group of anarchists. It was published in 1908. Remember when anarchists were a thing? Remember Sacco and Vanzetti?

Chesterton is a good author. He is skilled at keeping his reader engaged. I kept chuckling, I kept gasping. I was pretty riveted. Things kind of fall apart at the end, but overall it's a fascinating little novel.

Chesterton is also quite funny. This book isn't dry, it's very amusing. I laughed out loud more than once.

This book reminded me of:

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

A Wrinkle in Time

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

And many others, but those stick out.

There's a lot of great quips, a lot of great observations about life, and the book moves at a fast and interesting pace.

Now let's get to some of the spoilers:

(view spoiler)

Chesterton sees the enemy as The Rich.

"You've got that eternal idiotic idea that if anarchy came it would be from the poor. Why should it? The poor have been rebels, but they have never been anarchists; they have more interest than anyone else in there being some decent government. The poor man really has a stake in the country. The rich man hasn't; he can go away to New Guinea in a yacht. The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly; the rich have always objected to being governed at all. Aristocrats were always anarchists..." 67%

There's more like this sprinkled through the book. Poor people are workers and honest and Christian, the rich are lazy and immoral and bored. We have more to fear from the rich, who don't care about God, government, and their fellow human beings than we do from poor people who are simply trying to live.

TL;DR - Quite an amusing and strange little book. Where it ends up may not please you, Chesterton does get a little (view spoiler), but I thought it was overall enjoyable and rather charming. It's weird, but Chesterton also has a great sense of humor.

Like any man, he was coward enough to fear great force; but he was not quite coward enough to admire it. 32%

Dan Schwent says

The Man Who Was Thursday reads like P.G. Wodehouse writing from a Phillip K. Dick plot while on a Nyquil bender. It begins with two poets arguing in the park about whether poetry is more akin to law or anarchy. It turns out that the poet espousing anarchy is actually a member of an anarchist society and takes Syme, the other poet, to their meeting place to prove it after a vow of secrecy. Syme is actually a member of an anti-anarchy branch of Scotland Yard and usurps Gregory's spot as the new Thursday in the Council.

Gabriel Symes tells the story of his own recruitment into Scotland Yard by a philosopher policeman and goes on to infiltrate the Council of Days, each one taking the name of a day of the week.

None of the Council members are what they seemed at first glance. About halfway through, I was convinced none of them were actually anarchists.

I'm a little torn between whether I like this better than The Napoleon of Notting Hill. They probably really shouldn't be compared since they're different kinds of books.

Nancy says

A very original, wonderfully quirky, thought-provoking little book about an English detective who infiltrates a group of anarchists. Part fantasy, part mystery, part philosophical, lots of Christian symbolism that is not apparent until later in the book, but you don't have to be a Christian to enjoy it. There is so much going on here that I will have to reread it at some point.

Chris says

I lost my backpack thanks to this book.

It was years and years ago, probably my first winter in Japan, and I'd picked up this book at Maruzen. I had heard about Chesterton, mainly from the dedication page of Pratchett and Gaiman's *Good Omens* ("The authors would like to join the demon Crowley in dedicating this book to the memory of G.K. Chesterton. A man who knew what was going on.") and the title looked weird enough to be entertaining. So, I was reading the book on the train, as I often do, and I had my backpack on the floor between my feet. When the train got to my station, I stood up, still reading, and walked off.

It wasn't until I had to put the book down again to eat that I realized I no longer had my backpack.

This was no small problem, either - the bag had a lot of important stuff in it, not the least of which was my Palm Pilot with all my friends' addresses on it. There were also about two dozen Christmas cards in there, along with other various and sundry things. And it was a *good bag*, too.

Long story short (too late), I never got the bag back. The staff at my school, and even one of the students, were kind enough to call the Keihan lost & found a few times to see if anyone had turned it in, but with no luck. And whoever got it didn't do the obvious thing and look at the return address on *every single one of those Christmas cards, nooo....*

Ahem. I'm over it. Really.

My point is this: beware the seductive power of this book. Beware the enchantments laid upon it, and the dreamlike web that it weaves. For if you let it, this book will enrapture you, and gods help you if that happens.

The story is one that sucks you in almost from the first page, when two passionate poets argue the worth and detriment of society. Should it be torn down, and let chaos reign in the world? Is order the true glory of humanity, the crowning jewel of mankind? Should the existing paradigm be praised or destroyed, and is he who advocates the path of anarchy true to that path?

From that moment, that confrontation of poet-philosophers, we are drawn into a dark heart of true anarchy, where no one can be trusted to be who he appears to be. And not even the protagonist himself can be absolutely sure where his path will end.

Needless to say, I think this book was awesome on many levels. The whole thing reads like a dream, moving in and out of locales with odd fluidity, and it's honestly hard to put it down. It has a great cast of characters, each one distinct and interesting and worth your attention, and a great ending that, while not making a whole lot of sense, is entirely fitting.

What's really interesting is the modern applicability of this story. Its major theme is that of law versus anarchy, and when Chesterton wrote this back one hundred years ago in 1908 the anarchist movement was seen as a real threat. These people were not the angry kids, spray-painting Anarchy signs all over the place and listening to punk rock. The fringe radicals of the Anarchist movement advocated violence. They liked dynamite and struck terror in the hearts of the citizenry, much in the way that terrorists still do today. And like modern terrorists, they were driven by a twisted and dark ideology which placed their own motivations above society. In the world that Chesterton has made, the Law is in a perpetual battle with the forces of chaos, the dark and shadowy enemies who are always out to destroy us.

Sound familiar?

The hunt for terrorists is a great plot for any writer, and hundreds of them - good and bad - have used this trope as a way of telling a story. Chesterton, however, reached into the heart of that idea and found the uneasy twist that we are not always willing to deal with. He found the Nietzschean paradox about what happens when you battle monsters, and saw that it could very well be true. He has shown us that it is dangerous to act without knowing the truth, even if the truth isn't what you want it to be.

Neil and Terry were right - Chesterton knew what was going on. This book is just as relevant today as it was a century ago, even if Chesterton never meant it to be. No matter what the subtitle to the book may be, and no matter how he may have meant it, the book is still valuable to us. Well worth reading.

K.D. Absolutely says

This is my first book by G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) and I am very much impressed. This is one of the classic books included in the 501 Must-Read Books so I bought it three years ago but I only read this now because a good friend wanted to borrow this book.

This is a story of a undercover detective called **Syme** who joins Europe's Central Anarchist Council to infiltrate and fight against the growing anarchist movement. The central council members are named after the days of the week so when Syme joins, he gets the name "Thursday." He however, later finds out that out of the other six members, five are also undercover detectives like him. The only one who isn't is the head of the council called "Sunday." Or so Chesterton made us readers to believe so.

Basically a detective novel, this is also partly political thriller, horror, comedy, romance and Christian allegory. I think this beautiful blending of genre worked quite well as it did not leave any of the pages boring and uneventful. Most of the genres you can explicitly recognize while reading for example the comedic flavor is in those scenes involving hot-air balloon chase and a high-speed elephant pursuit towards the end. However, the Christian allegory is something that you have to deduce. For example, the revelations of the true character of the council members is similar to finding out that we are all sinners despite the fact that we project ourselves to always be morally upright and spiritually enlightened. The character of the leader made me think of him as Jesus and his 6 council members are among his 12 disciples. However, these are just my interpretations as I know other readers have their own and I cannot blame them since this multi-genre book is definitely multi-layered despite its brevity and simplicity in style.

I will definitely need to read more Chesterton books. Thanks to Berto for bringing the author to my attention.

Eliasdgian says

Ο Γκ?μπριελ Σ?ιμ, μυστικ?ς αστυνομικ?ς, αποκρ?πτοντας την αληθιν? του ταυτ?τητα, εκλ?γεται μ?λος του Ευρωπαϊκο? Κεντρικο? Συμβουλ?ου των Αναρχικ?v. Ο Σ?ιμ γ?νεται ?να απ? τα επτ? μ?λη μιας συνωμοτικ?ς κολεκτ?βας που ?χει θ?σει ως στ?χο να καταστρ?ψει τον κ?σμο, ανατιν?ζοντας τον Τσ?ρο της Ρωσ?ας και τον Πρ?εδρο της Γαλλικ?ς Δημοκρατ?ας. Πιστο? στους συνωμοτικο?ς καν?νες οι επτ? ‘Αναρχικο?’ αποκαλο?νται μεταξ? τους ?πως οι ημ?ρες της

εβδομ?δας. Ο Σ?ιμ ε?ναι ο ?νθρωπος που τον ?λεγαν Π?μπτη.

Ο Σ?ιμ, ?μως, δεν ε?ναι ο μοναδικ?ς μυστικ?ς αστυνομικ?ς της ιστορ?ας. Μ?σα απ? απ?θανες συμπτ?σεις κι εντυπωσιακ? παρ?δοξες σκην?ς καταδ?ωξης, μ?α προς μ?α οι μ?σκες π?φτουν, αποκαλ?πτοντας το αληθιν? πρ?σωπο των ανθρ?πων που τους ?λεγαν Δευτ?ρα, Τρ?τη, Τετ?ρτη, Π?μπτη και Σ?ββατο. Μ?νον ο ?νθρωπος που λεγ?ταν Κυριακ?, ο Μ?γας Πρ?εδρος του Συμβουλ?ου, ο εχθρ?ς της τ?ξης και της ασφ?λειας, η αντ?ρροπη δ?ναμη που αναπ?φευκτα υπ?ρχει προκειμ?νου το σ?μπαν να ισορροπε?, δεν ?χει αν?γκη τα προσωπε?α.

«Θ?λετε να μ?θετε τι ε?μαι, αυτ? δε θ?λετε;... ?μως σας λ?ω ?τι θα βρε?τε την αλ?θεια του τελευτα?ου δ?ντρου και του πιο απ?μακρου σ?ννεφου, πριν μ?θετε την αλ?θεια για μ?να. Θα καταλ?βετε τη θ?λασσα κι εγ? θα σας παραμε?νω ?να α?νιγμα? θα ξ?ρετε τι ε?ναι τ' αστ?ρια και δεν θα ξ?ρετε τι ε?μαι εγ?? απ? τη γ?ννηση του κ?σμου, με κυνηγο?ν ?λοι σαν τον λ?κο –βασιλι?δες και σοφο?, ποιητ?ς και νομοθ?τες, ?λες οι εκκλησ?ες και ?λοι οι φιλ?σοφοι. Δε μ' ?χουν πι?σει ?μως ακ?μα και τα ουρ?νια θα π?σουν την εποχ? που θα με τσακ?σουν».

Μαστορι? στο λ?γο και τις περιγραφ?, παραδοξ?τητες χωρ?ς τ?λος, υπαινικτικ?ς αναφορ?ς στην πολιτικ? πραγματικ?τητα της ηπε?ρου μας στο ?μπα του εικοστο? αι?να και σωρε?α συμβολισμ?ν. Καλ?ς ?ρισα στον μαγκ?, παρ?δοξο κ?σμο του G.K. Chesterton!

Βαθμολογ?α: Θ?λει και ρ?τημα;

Matthias says

This book is on my favorite shelf but was missing a review, even though I loved it from the very first time I encountered it.* Time to set things straight.

"The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare" is a unique book, that starts as a spy novel with a very compelling premise of underground anarchists, a mysterious police force and a game of hide-and-seek. Pretty early on there's shimmers of philosophical ramblings that will grow into an overpowering element later in the book. A table in a bar that turns out to be an elevator way down to the anarchists' local headquarters is the beginning of the spy-novel-ride getting bumpier, wilder and certainly stranger.

Soon you'll find that nothing is what it seems. The anarchists are mysterious and darkly looming, and you dread being there when their plans and identities are exposed. But it's the mission at hand to unmask these devils and as Gabriel Syme, the protagonist poet-detective, walks closer to his goal his steps become a glide and he slowly seems to lose control over where he's going to. Things get weirder and the tumble down the rabbit hole gains in pace. Elephants give chase to hot-air balloons through English landscapes and snow starts falling on summer days. And so the book itself turns into something that you'd never expect it to, given the way the stage was set. Sure, it says so in the title: "a nightmare", but it's often quite funny and not really scary enough to fall under that category. Anarchists have lost some of their fear-factor since the time this book was written, so I imagine it must have been more of a nightmare to Chesterton's original readership. This book doesn't scare like a nightmare does, not until Sunday gets in the picture, that is.

By the end of the book I wasn't quite sure how the hell I got there or even where I was, but I loved the ride.

Magical realism, philosophy, humour and a very sharp pen all in one book, and it seems to be well ahead of its time. All this is coming from an author who's mostly known for books on Christian orthodoxy, which in itself seemed somehow surprising, even though Christian philosophy is clearly present, especially towards the end. But it's not dry at all, not at all like how I would have expected someone preaching orthodoxy to deliver his message.

Additionally, the idea of having weekdays as codenames somehow strikes an enormous chord with me. It just seems all the more sinister by using these everyday codenames**. I wonder if this is where the Reservoir Dogs got their inspiration from, or if it really was just M&M's and Skittles. All I can say is that the title alone completely hooked me, and I'm glad it did, because the rest of the story reeled me in.

* My first encounter with this novel was through a video game, Deus Ex. I'm adding this reference because it introduced me to many books, such as Gravity's Rainbow (Pynchon, which I haven't read yet), Underworld (DeLillo, not read yet either) and The Napoleon of Notting Hill (written by Chesterton as well). The Man Who Was Thursday in particular was presented in this game with small excerpts of dialogues, whose power and intriguing nature even as stand-alone pieces of text completely won me over.

** Pun intended

Fergus says

The madcap adventures of a mild-mannered Scotland Yard investigator who has stumbled onto an Anarchist plot in Edwardian London, but can't reveal it to anyone. Substitute "terrorist" for "anarchist", substitute "post-Brexit" for "Edwardian" London, and you have the makings of a rollicking good yarn.

And Chesterton delivers!

Being Catholic, he has an acute eye for pure evil - which sobriquet precisely fits this odd and ornery assortment of bad guys. And he expertly holds our attention to the end, a dénouement which is truly apocalyptic - in the best religious sense of the word.

It is no wonder that Chesterton called it a "nightmare"... but a nightmare that's loads of fun!

Praj says

'Humanity crushed once again'. '50 dead, 120 injured'. 'Grave face of terror strikes again'. Familiar headlines scream through the pages of the newspapers each time a bomb goes off annihilating blameless lives. Through teeth gritting resilience, public outcry resonates through the deafened ears of failed intelligence and faith in the state's law and order hangs by a thin string. As the weeks pass by rapid sketches of the alleged bombers, email links, forensic reports, collected evidence from the attacked ground and pictures of rehabilitating victims are splashed across the dailies. If by any chance the investigation comes through, anonymous visages covered with black rags are photographed outside the courtroom, readied for trial procedures, which may go on for months, maybe even years. As the days go by, life returns to normalcy (yes! It is a tricky word); everything is forgotten and the news fade until once again "humanity is crushed" by another dastardly attack. The analytical carnival starts once again. This is the time I dearly wish we had 'philosophical policemen' just like Chesterton describes in his book. Policemen- (officers of law), who would discover the book of sonnets and verses from where the crimes will be committed; those that

recognize the intricate web of intellectual crimes. The derivation of dreadful thoughts- the human mind, so malicious and calculating camouflaged within an affluent, composed and erudite exterior. It is that very egocentric brainpower which churns out sadistic alterations from harmless verses and then picks vulnerable actors to craft that design into realism.

“Evil philosopher is not trying to alter things but to annihilate them”.

This book is more than a mere plot of undercover detectives and their clandestine exploration of the Secret anarchist Councilmen. Chesterton pens that a small time criminal is more of a good person. His aim is to eradicate only a certain obstacle and not annihilate the edifice. What caught my eye in one of the chapters was the elucidation of stereotyping poverty to rebellious festering.

“You’ve got that eternal idiotic idea that if anarchy came it would come from the poor. Why should it? The poor been rebels, but they have never been anarchists; they have more interest than anyone else in there being some decent government. The poor man really has a stake in the country. The rich man hasn’t; he can go away to New Guinea in a yacht. The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly; the rich have always objected to being governed at all. Aristocrats are always anarchists; as you can see from the baron’s wars”.

When a bomber or an active terrorist is caught, he mostly turns out to be from an impoverished background, where his ravenous mind and mislaid faith is manipulated to find refuge in an illusionary godly abode. These are mere actors for crying out loud, chosen by the scheming selfish elements who are coward enough to remain behind the backstage curtains. The affluent as elucidated in this narration are the ones to be feared. They have an abundance of monetary resources, have sheltering capacity in far away lands, if need be and have a mind that concocts the unexpected. Where do you think the enormous funds come for fertilizing terror? I do not want elucidate detailed reports of various pathways of monetary funds wired to definite cults or “charitable” institutions that ultimately fund the immoral actions. But, the currency sure is not a bequest from the poor or some excise complements from our paychecks. The respective courtesy comes from those societal fundamentals that remain unscathed or unfazed by decree. Who do you suppose manages the advanced scientific technologies in various bombing devices? The knowledgeable elite, isn’t it? The erudite or should I say the crème de la crème of religious preachers who instead of spreading peace and equality manipulates vulnerable populace digging their raw wounds every time through words that revolt in their bleeding wounds? I could go on and on, as it angers me to see such naivety among the elements of law and order or purposefully turning a blind eye on the so-called modernists who may be responsible in concocting the ongoing mayhem of lawlessness. Why couldn’t there be some ‘philosophical policemen’ here in India or any place that incessantly plays the role of a powerless victim?

Chapter 4- The Tale of the Detective is the deciding chapter that outlines infinitesimal details of who Gabriel Syme really is. Syme sneaks his way into a clandestine council of seven men, each named after a day of the week. Syme becomes the inevitable Thursday though a pact he made with Lucian Gregory ,a poet and a true anarchist. Fear catches with Syme as his path deepens into the sinister world of the other six council men; the President being the most feared of all. Chesterton throws a light on various aspects of fear that thrives within and outside us. We rebel against the only side that corrupts us. What makes a mutineer and destroy the very notion of survival? We try and run from fear and pain, until one eventually catches up and makes us susceptible to uncouth rudiments that shelter our mental nakedness. It is the most treacherous survival, if every time we need proof of familiarity to feel safe. When fear caught up with Syme suffocating his senses, he would feel protected only if a blue card (a source of identification given to every policemen in England) was shown to him. How vulnerable was Syme to live in a world of treachery and deceit? Makes me think of all the trepidation we feel every time we walk outside our homes or travel; the security checks, the sense of familiarity that we seek in bloodcurdling situations, the proof of safety that we search or reveal; spins a web of utter vulnerability that looms within the safest corners of our thoughts. The Man Who Was Thursday is a treasure that needs to be dug up by reading between the lines of a puzzling narrative to know what

Chesterton is really saying.

“Revolt in its abstract can be revolting. It is like vomiting.”

Lastly, if everything leads to God and when nature if dissected reveals the face of God, then should I assume that evil is illusionary? Is malevolence the creation of couple menacing minds? If God means endurance then why is such mutinous extermination carried in God's name after all?

Evgeny says

A buddy reads with my friends Carmen, Jeff, and Ginger - if she ever decides to join.

The true rating is 2.5 stars.

The plot is impossible to describe. All readers agree that this is a psychological thriller. This is the only point commonly agreed on. In any case the books starts with two poets arguing whether poetry should serve the law or anarchy - in other words, a typical first world problem.

Very quickly we move onto international conspiracy and after this all the way into bizarre and way beyond. Think Alice in Wonderland written while high on heavy drugs.

I always use this book as a proof that at the time it was published the drugs (the mind-altering kind) were freely available from any pharmacy.

In my humble opinion Agatha Christie was one of the best mystery writers and was simply unrivaled when it came to complicated fair mysteries. It is also my opinion that when it came to international conspiracy / spy mysteries The Dame of Mystery always wrote mediocre stuff at best - like somebody was ghostwriting for her.

It turns out G.K. Chesterton had exactly the same dubious honor. His Father Brown mysteries were interesting with unusual paradoxes.

His anthology The Man Who Knew Too Much had a fresh approach to a private detective idea. His international conspiracy The Man Who Was Thursday was a failure.

Please do not get me wrong. The first two thirds of the book were interesting and amusing enough with some slight religious undertones. The last third promptly ended up in bizarre zone with readers' head being beaten with a sledgehammer by the religious allusions (for those that did not get it earlier I guess).

So the book is better than 2 stars, but there is no way it is worth 3. I will take the easy way out and declare it to be 2.5 stars: by no means I regret reading this.

Paul Bryant says

They say that LSD was first synthesised in 1938, so it couldn't be that. But opium was imbibed in British society as we know from Thomas de Quincy up to Sherlock Holmes, so I'm going with opium.

This strange novel is a phantasmagoria which begins as a surrealistic spoof of Boy's-Own detective adventures in which our hero infiltrates the central council of the evil anarchists who are bent on destroying human society. Gathering more absurd elements (elephant chases through central London, medieval dance raves), it ends up as some kind of incoherent religious parable. The only sense I could make of it was that the message is Hindu - all of the world is divine, all of the world is God, all of the world is God dancing joyously with herself. That's about it, if anyone can nail it down more than that, I'm all ears.

As I read this, two things struck me, aside from thinking GK Chesterton's cocoa had been spiked with acid - I thought of an Arthur Penn movie from 1966 called *The Chase*, which begins conventionally and gets weirder and wilder as it progresses - must see that one again. And I thought that I've never come across so many beards in a single novel - maybe GK was a male facial hair fetishist - every character, and they're ALL men, has their beard or lack of beard carefully noted, so many beards there are that each time I opened my copy I thought I heard sociologists singing folk songs.

In one word : bonkers.

Jonathan Terrington says

The Man Who Was Thursday is my first venture into the writing of G.K. Chesterton having discovered the existence of this writer earlier in the year. Of course the first I heard of him was in reference to his Father Brown stories, one volume of which I have on my to read stack. I then heard that his most recognised book is this one, so naturally I organised to read it.

The Man Who Was Thursday is truly a classic detective tale, yet it is also an allegory. I didn't realise the book was an allegory when I began reading until I read up on the book and discovered that fact. However on finishing this book I can clearly see the allegorical nature of this book.

What did I love about this book? I loved the wit and humour in the writing. I loved the philosophical asides in the novel and the way in which G.K. Chesterton views humanity. I loved the uniqueness of this book. I may have seen the plot twists way before they happened but I still found everything else wholly unique.

The plot of this novel follows one man, a Philosophical Policeman/Poet as he goes undercover to infiltrate a bizarre group of anarchists. These anarchists each have a name of the week as their title and the main protagonist, Gabriel Syme, is given the title of Thursday. However he quickly discovers that it may be harder to hide who he is in the group than he realises as he discovers some surprises about the anarchists themselves. As for the allegory of the book? It seemed to me that G.K. Chesterton was suggesting that Christian believers are undercover agents if you will in the world and must go nearer to the devil at times than they do. What I mean by that is that I know of churches that believed dancing or drinking slightly was an evil and I think G.K. Chesterton is saying that Christian believers need to be less aloof and religious and more down to earth. That is what I saw in this book anyway...

I will admit I didn't 'get' the entirety of this book. Maybe study would be needed to fully grasp the hidden complexity of this novel. Do I recommend it for everyone? Not for everyone. I recommend it for those who

like an allegory, a mystery or a laugh. I recommend it for those who want to read about the many faces we as humans wear to hide our true identities from the anarchists around us.

Postscript:

Others have suggested that the book was about people experiencing pain and hurt in order to also experience joy. I may have to re-read this book or those sections. Is it dated? A little, but still highly readable. It's very surreal and crazy, still can't stop thinking about it's ending and what it all means...

Post-postscript:

I have since reading this days ago discovered more about G.K. Chesterton. He's apparently a noted literary theorist, poet, novelist, short story writer, a friend of George Bernard Shaw, influencer of C.S.Lewis with his apologetics work and witty journalist. He is known as the 'prince of paradox'. I look forward to reading more of his work!

Nikos Tsentemeidis says

Τι βιβλίο!

Ιδιοφυΐα ο Chesterton, σαν Ήνας Ήλλος Pessoa ? Pirandello

Laura says

The question "What is your favorite book?" has always been impossible for me to answer, but this is the only book I have ever felt comfortable defaulting to. I've read it at least a half a dozen times since I discovered a copy of it in a used bookstore when I was in middle school; I will probably reread it a dozen more in the next ten years. I get something different out of it every time I reread it.

The story itself makes no sense, until you come back to the subtitle: A Nightmare. Like a dream, or a nightmare, there is a thread of sense beneath the nonsense, and the mad escapades of the Supreme Anarchist Council are some how more deeply real even in their absurdity. One could call the story a parable, or a fable, but like the costumes worn by the protagonists toward the end of the book, the disguised elements of the story serve only to reveal more of its inner truth.

This book is full of great quotes and is one of the finer examples of Chesterton's witty and unique style of storytelling. Like quite a lot of his fiction, it is a story with Christian meaning woven into it; it's not necessary to be a practicing Christian to understand or get something out of the story, but some of the allegory may escape a reader who is unfamiliar with the basics of the book of Genesis.

When I finish this book I always feel a little bit bewildered, sort of mentally out of breath. I usually end up reading it in one or two sittings, propelled irresistibly toward the fantastic (in the original sense of the word) conclusion.

This book defies genre, plot summary, and most attempts at interpretation, so all I can say is that you should read it for yourself, and see what you make of it.

esté atento a lo que pueda llegar a venir.

Cada situación desemboca en otra totalmente opuesta y esto hace que la dinámica de la lectura no se detenga. La manera en la que Chesterton maneja los distintos cambios de ritmo es perfecta y es digno de destacar de este gran autor inglés, que fuera uno de los preferidos de Jorge Luis Borges.

Syme, es un poeta devenido en detective de la policía que debe infiltrarse dentro de una grupo de anarquistas, todos ellos con una función muy particular, que obedecen al mando de un hombre gigantesco que se hace llamar Domingo. A cada uno de los anarquistas le corresponderá un día de la semana, título un tanto extraño pero que se develará recién en el capítulo final de la novela.

Todo lo que Syme deberá descubrir está teñido por un juego de apariencias hasta el punto que nadie es quien parece ser y las sospechas e intrigas harán que el lector divague entre lo que Syme ve o lo que él cree que puedan ser o parecer los distintos personajes del libro.

El tema del anarquismo, muy en boga a principios del siglo XX (la novela fue publicada en 1908) es el central y el que maneja todos los peripecias que suceden en la novela.

El anarquismo, junto su pariente inmediatamente anterior y cercano, el nihilismo, aglutinó a muchos hombres que a partir de la negación de todo poder sembró el pánico en gran parte de Europa, especialmente en países como Rusia, Irlanda e Inglaterra, tendría su apogeo hasta casi mediados de siglo, en las épocas en donde la dinamita se hacía sentir sin anuncio alguno.

Toda la acción, que comienza tranquilamente en una plaza se trasladará a distintas ciudades de Inglaterra y concluirá en una misteriosa mansión en donde finalmente quedarán aclaradas (o tal vez no) las dudas que se le plantean tanto a Gabriel Syme como al lector de esta excelente novela. Difícilmente creo que un lector pueda aburrirse por como están planteados los hechos. Para lograrlo, Chesterton, Syme y todos los anarquistas y detectives se embarcan en una aventura trepidante y entretenida.

En un momento de monólogo y reflexión, Syme exclama *"La aventura puede ser loca, pero el aventurero debe estar cuerdo."*

Luego de tantas idas y venidas, corridas y persecuciones, no hay mejor frase para definir qué tipo de novela es "El hombre que fue jueves".

Paquita Maria Sanchez says

Boy, this was really good *until it wasn't at all anymore*. An intriguing story which suddenly turned into some sort of muddled message about patriotism? Capitalism? Christianity? Anarchy? Communism? The soul of all mankind? How redheads are hot and god is fat? Don't know, don't care.

Blah. Skip it.

PattyMacDotComma says

2★

Loved the language and loved the beginning. It's like a mad Monty Python story, but it lost me half way through. And to be fair, the Python crew, Terry Pratchett and others may well have been weaned on tales from Chesterton, so perhaps he should get more credit.

The main character, Syme, is a detective who is invited to a secret meeting of anarchists who are preparing to overthrow governments using bombs. He promises Gregory, the man who invited him, not to divulge anything of what he says. Gregory, in turn, promises to keep Syme's police identity secret. Both are champing at the bit to break their promises, but . . .

Syme attends a meeting to find the President is called Sunday, and the other members are named after days of the week, with a convenient vacancy for Thursday. He finds himself elected to be Thursday. Now what? Is he expected to bomb someone? Where? How?

He finds their next meeting at a very public restaurant breakfast table where they all openly discuss anarchy and laugh loudly. The theory is that they will be taken for fools and disregarded (which seems to be true).

In amongst the kind of boys-own action, there is a lot of musing and pondering and observing and pontificating on Life, some of which I quite enjoyed, especially considering this was written over a hundred years ago.

“Most of the women were of the kind vaguely called emancipated, and professed some protest against male supremacy. Yet these new women would always pay to a man the extravagant compliment which no ordinary woman ever pays to him, that of listening while he is talking.”

...

“And it is always the humble man who talks too much; the proud man watches himself too closely.”

...

I quite like this explanation of the power of monogamy:

“... there are no words to express the abyss between isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the mathematicians that four is twice two. But two is not twice one; two is two thousand times one. That is why, in spite of a hundred disadvantages, the world will always return to monogamy.”

And I'll leave you with a last one that could explain today's politics:

“The poor have sometimes objected to being governed badly; the rich have always objected to being governed at all.”

I enjoyed Syme's gradual uncovering of the secret society, but eventually, the story wore thin. I'm afraid this doesn't stand up very well against the many years of fantasy and science fiction that have been written since, but I assume it must have been a cracker of a story in its day.

Lyn says

What...?

What the hell did I just read?

Anarchists and poets. That part was deliciously, rebelliously fun to read. No doubt this is a novel idea and Chesterton's imagination is superb. The first 30-40 pages were awesome and I thought this could be my next 5 star rating. As I began to read this book enthralled; I found myself smiling frequently, laughing often, and being thoroughly impressed.

Then I found myself lost in an absurdist, magical realism murky realm of steam punk whatthehell???

And then the ending ... a steaming hot cup of damnedifIknowwhatthehellhewasgettingatsomekindofChristianallegory.

Chesterton's mastery of the English language, his rare skill at irony and his insidious ability to turn a phrase are on shining display in this 1908 publication. There are likely English professors out there who will say this was the best thing since macaroni and cheese.

But not me.
